soldier from bullet injuries on the fore-head. To meet the need for personal protection of troops combating insurgency, a total of 32,800 Bullet Proof Patkas were procured by Eastern Command between 1995 and 1998. The Bullet Proof Patkas have served the purpose for which these were procured and in Eastern Command there have been no casualties that have occurred to troops due to bullet injuries sustained on the fore-head. The item is ought for by the users and there have been no complaints from user units.

The delegated financial powers have provided flexibility ' J Army Commanders to counter insurgency in sensitive border States. The procurements from delegated financial powers have been made within the spirit of the delegation and have also had a positive impact on the morale of the soldier in the field due to the availability of requirements in a shorter time-frame.

Contracts with M/s. RVZ, Russia for supply of various types of ammunition

4420. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that two contracts were signed with M/s. RVZ, Russia for supply of various types of ammunition in August, 1999 and December, 1999 at a total cost Rs. 402.76 crores;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that the residual shelf-life of ammunition supplies was drastically low as stated in the CAG Report on OP-VIJAY, the Kargil Operation; and

(c) If so, the reasons for selection of these short life ammunition?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) Two contracts were entered with M/s ROSOVOOROUZHENE (RVZ), MOSCOW, RUSSIA on 11.8.1999 and 9.12.1999 for supply of ammunition from stocks of the Russian Army at a value of Rs. 412.2 crores.

Keeping in view the urgency of the requirement and the lead time likely to be involved in the 'supply of the ammunition' during

OP Vijay, the operational situation dictated the purchase of some Quantity of earlier vintage ammunition. Most of the weapons used by the Indian Army being of Russian origin, the Russian ammunition was trial evaluated and acceptable. Normally no Army in the world agrees to part with ammunition from its stocks. However, as a special case, Government of Russia responded to the request of the Government of India to supply ammunition critically needed by the Indian Army from the stocks of Ministry of Defence, of Russian Federation.

The decision to import some ammunition of earlier vintage was taken after due deliberations after ensuring that the full capacity of the Ordinance Factory Board to supply the ammunition produced indigenously, had been utilised and in consultation with the Director General of Quality Assurance. The DQA (Armaments) was a member of the Price Negotiation Committee which negotiated the procurement of ammunition from Russia. The vintage ammunition was contracted under a certificate being provided by the Ministry of Defence of Russia that the ammunition from their stocks had a residual storage life of three years.

The vintage of ammunitions supplied by RVZ, Russia was as per the parameters laid down in the contract. In all five different categories of ammunition were procured. The Directorate General Quality Assurance (DGQA) sentenced as serviceable 4 categories of ammunition after subjecting them to chemical analysis and proof firing as these ammunitions had still a residual shelf-life of minimum three years, as per the terms and conditions of the Contract.

In the case of 12.7 mm cartridges, the DGQA rejected 13.3 lakhs cartridges as being of a vintage older than contracted. Similarly, in the case of 15,000-130 mm VOF (FVC) ammunition, the DGQA, after prescribed tests, sentenced this ammunition as unserviceable. Quality claims have been raised in both the cases.

A detailed reply has been sent on this procurement to the Public Account Committee.